

7-1957

# Churches of Christ Salute You with a Herald of Truth: July Report and August Sermons

Herald of Truth

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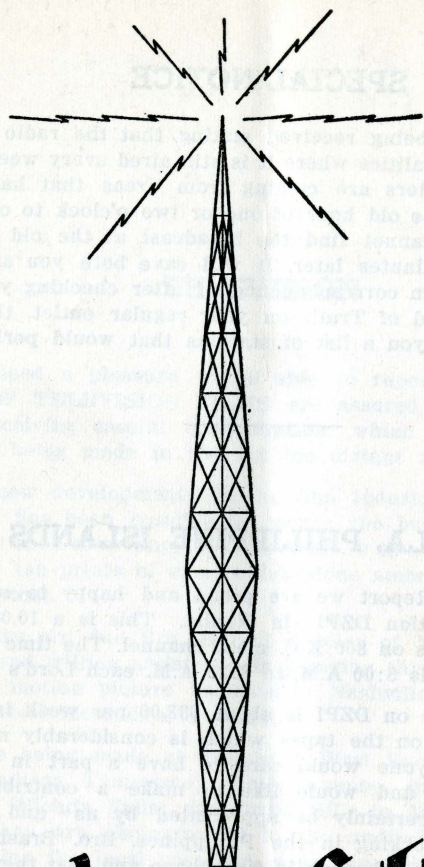
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-291



# Churches of Christ

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SALUTE YOU

JULY REPORT  
AND

AUGUST SERMONS  
1957





## **SPECIAL NOTICE**

Letters are still being received stating that the radio program is no longer heard in localities where it is still aired every week. In nearly every case these letters are coming from areas that have had the time changed from the old hour of one or two o'clock to one thirty to two thirty. If you cannot find the broadcast at the old time please check again thirty minutes later. It will save both you and us a lot of time and trouble in correspondence. If after checking you still cannot locate the Herald of Truth on your regular outlet, then we will be happy to furnish you a list of stations that would perhaps answer your need. Thanks.

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## **MANILA, PHILIPPINE ISLANDS**

Since our last Report we are proud and happy to announce the addition to radio station DZPI in Manila. This is a 10,000 Watt station and it broadcasts on 800 K.C. clear channel. The time of broadcast for Herald of Truth is 8:00 A.M. to 8:30 A.M. each Lord's Day.

The cost of time on DZPI is about \$38.00 per week in addition to the cost of postage on the tapes which is considerably more than in the states. If anyone would care to have a part in keeping this station on our list and would like to make a contribution toward that end it would certainly be appreciated by us and Bro. Ralph Brashears who is working in the Philippines. Bro. Brashears reports that the program came through in fine shape and that they are looking forward to results they hope it will produce.

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## **CANAL ZONE**

An audition tape was sent this week to station HOXO in Balboa, Canal Zone, (Panama). This station will broadcast the program for the local congregation for \$5.00 per week providing that it meets station approval. We feel no particular concern as to its doing this as it has been on another station in Panama in years gone by. We are indebted to Bro. L. D. Lawrence of Nashville, Tenn. for his constant efforts to help us extend the coverage enjoyed by Herald of Truth especially in other nations. He has been of great help in the two stations just mentioned.

## **TELEVISION**

It is indeed a pleasure to be able to report that at this time SEVEN NEW TELEVISION FILMS are assured, and that as many more are receiving careful consideration, which we believe will result in their being made in the not too distant future.

Due to new developments in the film industry both in film and techniques it has been possible to reduce the budget from a cost of some \$6000.00 each to a range of from \$1500.00 to a little above \$2000.00. This includes ten prints of each which alone amounts to about \$500.00 of the total cost.

Our thanks are due Bro. Harold Bradley of Nashville, Tennessee, for his able and willing assistance in bringing this information to us. He is in the motion picture business in Nashville and so has access to the very latest methods and products.

Films are being made at Hillsboro, West End, Chapel Avenue in Nashville; Madison, Tennessee; Union Avenue in Memphis; Tenth and Broad in Wichita Falls; and Druid Hills in Atlanta, Georgia, congregations. They are photographed in the auditoriums of these congregations using the local preacher, song director and congregational singing. The films are being paid for by these congregations and given to the Highland church in Abilene to be used for Herald of Truth telecasts. The Highland elders are truly grateful for the cooperation of these churches in helping to make more films possible that the offer of \$500,000.00 worth of free time may be accepted.

As more films are made available, we shall do our best to keep the brotherhood informed. Also progress in telecasting in various cities.



## HELP NEEDED

Since the only way this program can possibly be carried on is by the contributions of churches and/or individuals it is necessary for us at times to simply ask for help. This is the time of year when contributions are always at the lowest. Since we are trying our best to avoid dropping any radio stations we are appealing to members of the church and churches who are able to make a contribution of any size toward keeping the station list intact. Don't forget, "There is no such thing as a small contribution" in preaching the gospel to millions by radio and television.

## SOWING AND REAPING -- NO. 3

By JAMES D. WILLEFORD

Radio Sermon No. 288

August 4, 1957

A story is told of two Scotchmen who emigrated to California. They wanted to have in their new home some reminder of their homeland. One took with him a thistle, the national emblem. The other took a swarm of honey bees

Years passed by, and now the fields of California are cursed with the thistle, but the forests are laden with honey.

Little did those two men think of what would grow out of their selections, either for good or for evil.

And so it is in our moral and spiritual sowing. Many of us give little thought to the kind of seed we are planting. But we should remember that ignorance of the kind of seed we are sowing makes no difference. If I think I am sowing good seed, and it happens to be bad, I shall have a bad harvest. Therefore, it becomes me to see what kind of seed I am sowing.

Suppose I meet a man who is sowing seed, and I ask: "What kind of seed are you sowing?" and he replies, "I don't know!" In reply I ask, "Don't you know whether it is tares or wheat, good or bad?" And he answers, "No, I don't know what it is, but it is seed, and I am sowing it!"

What would you think of such a man? Perhaps you would think he had holes in his head. But, friend, he would not be half as foolish as the man who sows for time and eternity, knowing that he is sowing the kind of seed which will bring him eternal misery.

Nature makes no allowance for mistakes, and for this reason we should be exceedingly careful about the kind of seed we sow. A few years ago a friend of mine prepared an entire row across his garden for radishes. He says, "An abundance of good, sound seed was planted in the place thus prepared, and the crop was thoroughly and carefully cultivated. The season was favorable. An abundant crop was the result. Never a radish grew in that row, however, but such a crop of "touch-me-nots", or "balsams," we have never raised. We had flowers three times a day and between meals — enough for ourselves and all our neighbors. We had a surplus-abundance of balsams, but no radishes. We simply made a mistake in selecting the seed we sowed."

This incident illustrates the truth that nature makes no allowance for our mistakes; hence we should be very careful in the selection of seed to sow. We should never assume to be so nearly superhuman,



or divine, as to know we are right simply because we think or feel like we are right. My friend thought, and therefore felt like, he was sowing radish seed, when he was sowing "balsam" seed. He was sincere and honest, but he was mistaken. Nature, however, made no allowance for his mistake.

So it may be in the realm of religion, as we know it is in the realm of nature: for Solomon says, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 15:26). We may think we are right, hence feel like we are right, refuse to investigate our position in the light of truth divine, and thus, treating Divinity with contempt, be eternally lost.

We are not dependent upon Solomon and the analogy between literal and spiritual seed sowing alone for this startling conclusion. The merciful Saviour Himself says, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:21-23).

Father, do you know what kind of seed you are sowing in your family? Are you setting your children a good or a bad example? Do you spend so much time at the club that you have become almost a stranger to them? Or are you training them for God and righteousness?

There are fathers who excuse themselves of any responsibility for training their children by saying, "We do not talk to our children about religion because we want them to make their own choice when they grow up." This reminds me of an anecdote I read about Coleridge. One of his friends objected to prejudicing the minds of the young by selecting the things they should be taught. One day the philosopher-poet invited him to take a look at his garden, and took him to where a luxuriant growth of ugly weeds spread themselves over beds and walks alike.

"You don't call that a garden!" said his friend.

"What!" said Coleridge, "would you have me prejudice that ground in favor of roses and lilies?"

Have you never noticed what happens when a child's mind is not trained? Let a child be idle, and Satan will soon lead him into mischief. He must be looked after. Those things what will help to develop character must be selected for him; and hurtful things must be kept out just as industriously as the farmer cultivates the useful products of the soil, but wages continual war on weeds.

A father started for his office early one morning, after a light fall of snow. Turning, he saw his two-year-old boy endeavoring to put his tiny feet in his own footprints. The little fellow called after him, "Go on, I'se comin,' papa; I'se comin' yight in ure tracks." He picked the little boy up in his arms and returned him to his mother, and started again for his office. His habit had been to stop on the way at a saloon for a glass of liquor. As he stood upon the threshold of the tavern that morning he seemed to hear a sweet coice say: "Go on, I'se comin,' papa; I'se comin' yight in ure tracks." He stopped, he hesitated, he looked the future squarely in the face. "I cannot afford to make any tracks I would be ashamed to have my boy walk in," he said decidedly, and turned away.

Father, mother, neighbor, are your tracks true? Are they straight? Can you turn to those walking behind you, and say: "Follow me, as I follow Christ"? Are you leading your children safe to the Great Shepherd?

The best time to sow the good seed is before Satan has scattered the tares. God has warned and admonished us to sow at the right time. He says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." "Train up a child in the way he should go." "Provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." If a farmer neglects to plant in the spring-time, he can never recover the lost opportunity; no more can you, if you neglect yours. Youth is the seed-time; and if it is allowed to pass without good seed being sowed, weeds will spring up and cover the soil. It will take bitter toil to uproot them.

My friend, what kind of seed are you sowing? Let your mind sweep over your record for the past year. Have you been living a double life? Have you been preaching one thing and practicing another? If there is anything you detest, you say it is hypocrisy. Do you tell me God does not detest it also?

What kind of seed are you sowing, my friend; good seed or bad seed? There will be a harvest, and you are bound to reap, whether you like it or not. Tell me, how do you spend your spare time? Telling vile stories, polluting the minds of others, while your own mind is also polluted? Do you read any literature which befouls your mind? How do you spend the Lord's day?

Come, my friend, what kind of seed are you sowing? What will the harvest be? Will it be a black harvest, or are you going to have a joyful harvest? If you think that, when you have sown tares that wheat will come up, you are greatly mistaken. If you think you can give a loose rein to your passion and lusts, and yet have eternal life, you are deceiving yourself. For God says, "He that soweth to his



flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

There are only two directions in which the law of sowing and reaping leads: Sowing to the flesh, and a harvest of corruption, or sowing to the Spirit, and a harvest of everlasting life.

"Sowing to the flesh" does not mean simply taking care of the body. The body of a Christian is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we may be sure that the proper care of it is well-pleasing to our Lord. The expression, "Sowing to the flesh" refers to pandering to the lusts of the body, pampering it, providing gratification for its unlawful desires at the expense of the higher part of man, and indulging the animal propensities which in their excess are sinful. The Bible says the works of the flesh are, "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like" (Galatians 5:19-21).

And yet it must not be thought that indulgence in the grosser vices is the only way of sowing to the flesh. Every desire, every action that has not God for its end and object is seed sown to the flesh, and will reap corruption, just as surely as lying and adultery. No matter how polite and refined and respectable the seed may be, its true nature will out; the blight of corruption will be upon it.

How foolish are the strivings of men in the view of this judgment! Many a man will sacrifice time, health — even his character — for money. What does he gain? Corruption; something that is not eternal, that has not the qualities of "everlasting life." John said, "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof." Peter said "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away." None of these fleshy things have their roots in the eternal. You may even outlive them in your own short life.

Men make this mistake — they sow to the flesh, and think they will reap the harvest of the Spirit. They are like the boy in the Sunday School class to whom the teacher related the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The teacher asked, "Now, which would you rather be, boys—the rich man, or Lazarus?" One boy answered, "I would rather be the rich man while I live, and Lazarus when I die." But that cannot be: it is flesh and corruption, or, Spirit and everlasting life. There is no bridge from one to the other.

"Sowing to the Spirit" implies self-denial, resistance of evil, obedience to the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, living in the Spirit, guidance by the Spirit. We sow to the Spirit when we use our abilities and means to advance spiritual things. We sow to the Spirit when we

crucify the flesh and its lusts, when we yield ourselves to Him as we once yielded ourselves to the flesh. The Bible says the fruit of the Spirit is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Galatians 5). In this world the harvest is growth of character, deeper respect, increasing usefulness to others; and in the next world, acceptance with God, and everlasting life.

Every act of our lives is a seed, every word is a seed, every deed is a seed, and we are not going over the countryside scattering these seeds in the valleys or on the hillsides, but we are scattering them in human hearts, and they come up and produce and reproduce just like the seed we sow.

It is said of an English traveler that he so loved the wild flowers that grew at the sides of the lanes and in the fields of England, that when he went abroad he would fill his pockets with the seeds and scatter them broadcast. Almost every day we live there are opportunities for sowing the seed of God in some heart; it may be some simple word, some kindly act. Just a line in a letter we write, or a text we quote, and the seed is sown and some life is blessed.

The poet has eloquently said:

O, scatter seeds of loving deeds

Along the fertile field;

For grain will grow from what you sow,

And fruitful harvest yield.

Though sown in tears through weary years,

The seed will surely live;

Though great the cost it is not lost,

For God will fruitage give.

The harvest-home of God will come:

And after toil and care.

With joy untold your sheaves of gold

Will all be garnered there.

(300 Illustrations for Christian Service, by Knight, p. 622)

Some harvests ripen almost immediately; but as a rule we find it true in the natural world that there is delay before the seed comes to maturity. It is growing all the time, however; first the little green shoot breaking through the soil, then the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. The farmer is not disappointed because all his crops do not spring up like mushrooms in a night. He looks forward with patience, knowing that the reaping time will come in due season. The Lord says, "Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain."



Likewise, we must learn the lesson of patience, and wait for the harvest of our spiritual sowing. The inspired writers of the New Testament say, "Be patient therefore, brethren," and "let us not grow weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (James 5:7; Galatians 6:9).

But we must not forget that the reaping for bad sowing may also be delayed. The Bible says, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (Eccl. 8:11).

The idea that a person may do some evil in the dark and not have it brought to light is fatal. God says it shall be brought to light. It is folly for a man who has covered his sins to think that there shall be no resurrection of them and no final judgment. Look at the sons of Jacob. They sold Joseph and deceived their father. Twenty long years rolled away, and even down to Egypt their sin followed them; for they said: "We are guilty of the blood of our brother." The reaping time had come at last for those ten sons who sold their brother.

A leading surgeon performed a critical operation before his class one day. The operation was successful, as far as his part was concerned. But he turned to the class and said: "Six years ago a wise way of living might have prevented this disease. Two years ago a safe and simple operation might have cured it. We have done our best today as the case now stands; but nature will have her word to say. She does not always repeal her capital sentences." The next day the patient died, reaping the fruit of his excesses.

We are all preparing our harvests for time and for eternity. And so we ask: What are you sowing, my brother, my sister, my friend? What are you sowing? The crop which results from your sowing will answer that question, and the answer shall be clear and correct; "for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

In the thirteenth chapter of Matthew we read of "a man which sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way." When the wheat appeared, "then appeared the tares also." Hence the servants of the husbandman said to him: "Didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?" He promptly replied: "An enemy hath done this." Did he see his enemy sowing the pernicious seed, to produce the troublesome tares? No; it was evidently done while he slept. Why, then, did he so promptly, plainly and positively reply: "An enemy hath done this"? Because he knew none but an enemy would willfully sow bad seed in his neighbor's field. All respectable people readily recognize any man who would do that, not only as an enemy, but as a cruel, contemptible, cowardly enemy.

We all understand this, and yet, strange as it may seem, all over this land men are willfully sowing the seed of sin — seed that must necessarily produce the very worst kind of a crop for time and for eternity. None but an enemy would sow bad seed in his neighbor's field, but a man will, himself, deliberately and persistently sow the very worst kind of bad seed in his own field.

If some friend had roused that husbandman from his slumber at midnight, and said to him, "An enemy is preparing to sow in your field seed that will ruin your crop and your field," do you think he would have turned over and said, "Go away and leave me alone"? No one believes he would have acted thus. He would have sincerely thanked his neighbor, and would have watched and taken necessary precautions to prevent the sowing of pernicious seed in his field. When the question of the infinitely more important sowing is involved, however, a man will refuse to heed the warnings of those who love him best and trust him most — will reject the advice of his truest friends, and fill the field of his own life with bad seed — even the very worst. He will go right on from bad to worst, "sowing seeds of bitterness for his reaping by and by."

In closing this lesson, we beseech you to stop all sinful sowing, which will produce nothing but a corrupted harvest, and to start sowing to the Spirit that you may reap life everlasting. Turn to the Lord in faith, repentance, and baptism, and then continue to sow in righteousness that you may reap in joy.

## THE COVETOUS HEART

By JAMES D. WILLEFORD

Radio Sermon No. 289

August 11, 1957

The greatest misfortune which can befall a man in this world is neither loss of estate nor sickness of body, but his greatest misfortune is disorder of mind. We are taught to pray for those who are afflicted or distressed in mind, body, or estate," but the heaviest affliction or distress is mental. Hurt of mind is more serious than hurt of body. The saddest fate which can overtake one in the flesh is that of shattered reason. A disordered mind is like "sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh." To touch the spirit is to touch man in his most vital, vulnerable part.

It was a misfortune to Job that his property was stolen; that his sons and daughters perished; that his body was smitten with a loathsome disease, but it would have been a more terrible misfortune if his mind had been smitten with distrust and hatred. Because a depraved



mind, a jealous, envious spirit, is the last and worst misery which can befall mortal man on earth, the Lord says, "Thou shalt not covet."

Covetousness is a mental disease. It works like a malignant fever not in the body, but in the thoughts and imaginations of the heart. It inflames and irritates the whole nature. Like other diseases, it may be avoided or it may be invited. As we invite bodily sickness by needless and improper exposure, so we invite spiritual sickness by needless and improper exposure. He who suffers himself to brood over his own unhappy lot and to contrast it with that of more fortunate people is opening the way for envy, jealousy, and other moral maladies to fasten themselves upon his spirit.

Covetousness comes from a Greek word which means **grasping at more**. It has been defined as the fatal temper of never being content with what one has, but always seeking a little more, according to the saying that "Enough is just a little more than what one has." The actual word "covet" in its original meaning implies delight in some object, and because delight in anything necessarily means a sense of desire to possess, the word was used to mark that desire to possess, more than the delight which prompted the desire. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul uses a Greek word, which is most frequently translated "lust." It is often rendered "desire," and sometimes "covet," and occasionally "concupiscence." These translations will help to throw light upon the word. Its essential meaning is "to set the heart on," very literally, "to pant after."

The sin, therefore, suggested by the word "covet" is very evidently that of desire to possess something which belongs to another. Ordinary desire is not wrong, but covetousness goes far beyond ordinary desires. It is an overmastering, excessive, craving for anything one cannot innocently and uprightly possess. Bible scholars say that "to covet is to find pleasure in what belongs to another, to set the heart on it, to yearn and long for it, to break the God-ordained barriers in order to reach and seize it" (*Tarbell's Teachers' Guide*, 1938, p. 409). By way of illustration, a person may see a picture upon the wall of a friend's house, admire it, desire it and then purchase one like it. The desire in that case is not the sin of coveting, for it may be satisfied legitimately. But where the object admired is for any reason out of reach of the one admiring, excessive desire for it is a violation of God's commandment against coveting.

When the tenth commandment was given at Mt. Sinai, God said, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's" (Exodus 20:17). The key to this command against covetousness is found in the words "thy neighbour's." The fact that these things named were al-

ready possessed by a neighbor implies that they were beyond the possession of others. It is not wrong to desire a wife, nor a man servant, nor a maid servant, nor an ox, nor anything that in itself is right. But it is wrong to desire any of these when through any circumstances they are out of the reach of the one desiring them.

In our day the commandment against covetousness might read, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's automobile, thy neighbor's ability to make a large salary, thy neighbor's honor, his trip abroad, thy neighbor's educational advantages, his good looks, his legacy — anything that is thy neighbor's."

There was one very obvious difference between the tenth commandment and all the nine that preceded it. In them it was some overt act of evil — idolatry, murder, theft, lying — that was forbidden. But the commandment against covetousness had to do, not with the words of the mouth, nor with the deeds of the hand, but with the thoughts of the heart. Thus the last commandment of the Decalogue was the sharpest, most penetrating of all. An Israelite might well say, "I may do no murder, I may never steal, I may never commit adultery, I may never bow my knee before some idol of wood or stone, but if my heart is in bondage to evil desires, even though as yet they may not have broken forth in evil deeds, this great law of God will not hold me guiltless."

The command against covetousness was the climax of the law. It went deeper than any of the other commandments. Jesus had to take some of the others and deepen and improve them for His disciples in order that they might feel that a hateful feeling was murder and a lustful thought adultery; but He did not touch this commandment. It went down of itself into men's secret thoughts and feelings. They might refrain from theft or uncleanness; but if the covetous desire was there, they were condemned.

This is a unique commandment. Search all the laws of all the world, and you will not find one which resembles it. The commands against murder, stealing, and bearing false witness you will find in all legal codes, though only as prohibitions of crimes amenable to judicial punishment. But the command against covetousness is the complement of all the rest. It shows that God requires of us not only outward virtue, but inward holiness; that He demands in us the sacrifice of the will, from which wicked actions spring; that sinful imaginations are a crime against Him as well as wicked acts. Human laws can only prohibit those crimes of which human eyes can take cognizance; the thoughts of men are beyond their reach. None can enter the mind of man save the divine Legislator who would fain transform it from a haunt of devils into a sanctuary of God. The command which prohibits not only the committing of a crime, but concupiscence, or evil desire as well, can be uttered by God alone.



The laws of men say, "Thou shalt not steal," but the law of God says, "Thou shalt not desire what is not thine own." All the sins forbidden by the Ten Commandments, when we trace them back like the Nile River from its seven mouths to its source, have their origin in evil desire. Wrapped up in this commandment against covetousness lie the possibilities of the violation of all the others. Murder, adultery, theft, false witness are each the selfish violation of the rights of another. If the commandment against covetousness is kept in the heart, all the others are easier to keep. If it is violated in the heart, the way is open for the violation of each of the others. It would be possible to take each commandment and show how its violation is made likelier and easier by covetousness in the heart. There is a striking proof of this thought in the epistle to the Ephesians where the apostle Paul uses the word "covetousness" to illustrate the peculiar guilt of sensual sin. His statement: "To work all uncleanness with greediness," is in the original, "with covetousness" (Ephesians 4:19).

It is self-evident that hardly anything has more to do with man's outward world, with shaping his life and giving to it character and quality, than his inward world or life. Feelings and sentiments make or mar the man. "As a man thinketh, so is he."

Covetousness is a universal and long-lived plant, having its roots deep down in the subsoil of selfishness. It is born of laziness, of discontent, of envy, of ambition, or love of show, of craving for position, and of passion for power. So great is the power of greed in men's lives that we shall never overcome it wholly, so long as we are finite men. We cannot eradicate it, but we can learn to recognize it in its various disguises and curb and control it by the power of the gospel. The fact of human greed constantly endangers life itself, because men will sacrifice even the lives of other men to achieve their own greedy ends; it constantly endangers the sanctity of marriage, in that unbridled lust is merely one of the forms which the love of power takes, often involving much more than mere physical desire; it constantly endangers the dignity of ownership because we covet the possessions which other men have, and therefore find subtle ways of justifying ourselves when we take them; it constantly endangers the structure of mutual trust, because greed will make us distort the truth in order to degrade our competitor or to elevate ourselves in relation to him. The divine command against covetousness goes beyond overt actions to the source of actions, and it puts the final emphasis on the motive rather than the deed. It bids us to clean up our hearts, and thereby cleanse our thinking.

Temptations and snares lie in wait for those who have set their heart upon gaining riches. Foolish and injurious desires possess them, which lead to moral and spiritual ruin. The Lord says, "he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent." And He tells why: For the

love of money — not money itself, which is good, but the love of it, the absorption in its attainment — is the root of all kinds of evil. And then the Lord adds, "It is by aspiring to be rich that certain individuals have gone astray from the faith and found themselves pierced with many a pang of remorse" (I Timothy 6:10; Moffatt's translation).

Christ spoke a parable about a man who had not grasped the truth that a man's life does not consist in his possessions, however abundant they may be. The man has been called "the rich fool." His harvests were so plentiful that he knew not where to keep them. He decided to pull down his barns and build larger ones to hold his grain and his goods.

The thing the rich man was continually saying to himself unmade his life: I will pull down my barns and build greater and there will I bestow all my grain and my goods, and I will say to my soul, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." In connection with the parable of this rich man, we would do well to recall the words of Isaac Watts: He said

There are a number of us creep  
Into this world to eat and sleep,  
And know no reason why we're born  
But only to consume the corn,  
Devour the cattle, flesh and fish,  
And leave behind an empty dish.

(Quoted in Tarbell's Teacher's Guide for 1938, p. 410).

But God said unto the rich man in the parable, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Luke 12:20). Thus ends the parable of one who laid up treasure for himself and was not rich toward God.

In this parable our Lord gives us a definition of the moral law of wealth. He said, "Beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth." Wealth, in our degenerate use of the word, means this abundance of our acres or our stocks and bonds; but in the old Saxon it means well-being. Whatever adds to the real life of a man, to his knowledge or his virtues, increases his wealth. But such possession is by its very nature unselfish. Wisdom, refinement and knowledge are not lessened by distribution, but our happiness is enlarged as we impart them.

Covetousness, then, is the desire for that which is not wealth, but for that which can only feed the selfish appetites. If this seem idle talk, it may perhaps be worth your thought to examine it a little more deeply. What is the value of money? It is for what it can buy. A bar of gold is worth nothing to the savage, whose simple barter is effected



by a few shells; and nothing again to a hungry man in a desert place, who would gladly give it for a loaf of bread. Use is value.

The mere increase of property is not wealth. One wonders at the miser, who, by the strange absurdity of human nature, grows into the love of money for its own sake, heaps up his coin, and starves himself. But carry the principle further. Covetousness has many more attractive shapes. A rich man purchases a fine painting or a costly library, but he has not the education to appreciate either. His money cannot buy him knowledge or taste, and thus he is really not half so much the owner of his estate as the poor artist, who enjoys the gems of his gallery or the landscape, that cannot be hedged in by his garden. This is the moral teaching of Christ. Riches are not evil, but the love of money, the desire of it for any purpose save a real good is a root of all evil. Selfishness, pride, silly luxury, all these are the vices of the covetous spirit.

A few years ago a millionaire died in our country, and they sang at his funeral the song, "There's a Gold Mine in the Sky." Let us hope that the song was not a slander. But, to the covetous, a heaven without gold mines would be no heaven at all.

Have you observed how the tenth commandment bends round to meet the first? What is the first commandment? "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." What is the tenth? "Thou shalt not covet." Now, what says the apostle Paul? "Covetousness is idolatry." So, then, he who breaks the tenth commandment breaks likewise the first, for he sets up an idol in the place of God. This identification of covetousness with idolatry—which, more than anything else may help some of us to realize its true character, its hatefulness and heinousness in the sight of God—is not uncommon in the New Testament.

Christ said, "Ye cannot serve God and —" What? If we were hearing the quotation for the first time, how should we have expected it to end? "Ye cannot serve God and the world," or "God and the devil"? But Christ knew that there is no more deadly rival of the love and service of God than the love and service of money, and therefore He said, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

The Lord made this statement after warning His disciples against laying up treasures for themselves upon the earth. He followed it by declaring that they were not to be anxious concerning the things they should eat, or drink, or put on. They were rather "to seek first the kingdom of God." The statement itself is most suggestive, as putting into contrast the two camps in which men serve—God and Mammon. The inspiration and force of service in the camp of God is that of rest and satisfaction. The stimulus and spur of service in the camp of Mammon is that of desire and covetousness. Man serves God in the quiet force of his rest in God. Man serves Mammon in the restless en-

ergy of his desire for Mammon. Herein lies the most terrible indictment of covetousness. It is the fever which makes the eye glisten with a false luster, the cheek flush with deceitful color, the muscles twitch with unnatural activity, the nerves throb with restless desire. It is the service whose final wage is death. Wherever man desires anything, small or great, outside the possibility of righteousness, he is in that measure in the grip of a fever which must destroy him unless it be quenched.

Being thus a rottenness of the inner life, covetousness shuts its possessor out of the kingdom of God. Twice over, Paul tells us that covetousness is idolatry. The man who worships mammon naturally cannot worship God. James declares that the covetous man, the man who puts the world first, is hostile to God. "The love of the world is enmity against God." "We know," says Paul, "that no covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." Covetousness, then, makes fellowship with Jesus Christ an impossibility.

Martin Luther said, "Whatever thy heart clings to and relies on, that is properly thy God." Our danger lies in putting things or people in God's place, longing for and pinning our faith to something less than the Most High. The Lord saw men wanting money, wanting it no doubt for a great many mixed motives, lofty and base, just as men want it today; and He warned that such a desire can become so strong that men become worshipers of Mammon.

The folly of covetousness is seen when we remember that we personally cannot use much while we live, and that we cannot take our wealth with us when we die. As the apostle Paul says, "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out" (I Timothy 6:7). It is told of Alexander the Great that he gave orders that, when he should die, his hands should be left outside his coffin, so that his friends might see that, though he had conquered the world, he could take nothing of his conquests into the hereafter. In like manner, the famous Saladin, it is said, ordered a long spear with a white flag attached to it to be carried through his camp, bearing this inscription: "The mighty King Saladin, the conqueror of all Asia and Egypt, takes with him, when he dies, none of his possessions except this linen flag for a shroud." (See *The Ten Commandments* by George Dana Boardman, p. 330).

"Ye cannot serve God and . . ." To have God means that God has all of us. Coveting anything apart from Him is to lose Him. Jesus tells us that covetousness, a divided heart, dooms us to spiritual numbness and renders God beyond our feeling. We want the righteous God, and at the same time we want our own way; we want our Father's "well done," and we want to stand in with our worldly neighbors; we want to do His



will, and we want the smiles of the world; we want to spend and be spent for the kingdom, and we want to be comfortable and amused while we are doing it. James calls us "double-minded," and Jesus explains the double-mindedness by two deities—God and Mammon.

If we covet God, He must be coveted with our entire natures in order to be had. There can be no side desires; the whole current of our being must flow in just one direction. An occasional wistfulness for higher things, a stray trust in love, a partial resolve to seek righteousness, a fitful aspiration for justice, a thought once in a while of the will of the Most High—these will never give us God.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all," or there is some undevoted part of self coveting something which is out of harmony with God, who is love, and that is idolatry. To give one's whole self to Him, and to be satisfied with Him is so to find God, that there is no fractional longing left to covet anything unrelated to His will. God is all in all. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth I desire besides Thee" should be the song of our hearts.

But how can we concentrate our love upon Him, and have no desires straying off on unhallowed ends? Jesus Christ proved the solution of Paul's problems. After the spell of the Lord was cast over him, Paul said, "One thing I do," and "To me to live is Christ." God, when He comes to us through Christ, claims and captures as much as in us is. He engrosses the whole man, fills the entire horizon. We covet His life with God, His life with men, His gifts. And we are so covetous of Him that we covet nothing else.

Our safety from all other coveting lies in constantly looking off to Him, and letting Him draw out our every desire and confidence and fasten them on Himself.

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want;  
More than all in Thee I find."

Then God through Him possesses us entirely, and we seek Him with our whole hearts, and find Him. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul," "I have no good beyond Thee."

The Lord can be yours today, but you must come to Him in simple trusting faith, and in joyful obedience to His will. The Bible says that He becomes the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him. (Heb. 5:9). We must devote to Him our heart, our life, our love—and this devotion involves faith for we must believe in Him with all the heart; it includes repentance for we must change our way of living, and it includes baptism "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3).

## BEWARE OF COVETOUSNESS

By JAMES D. WILLEFORD

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I shall not soon forget the shock of surprise with which, some years ago, I read an article in a religious magazine in which the writer pieced together the teaching of Christ concerning the use of money. Never before had I realized how large a place that subject filled in His public ministry, and if anyone is disposed to murmur because, instead of preaching the gospel, I have turned aside to speak of covetousness, let me say to him that, if we preachers spoke about it as Christ did, there would be not merely an occasional pulpit reference, but a sermon on the subject at least once a month.

We might have thought if we had been asked what the Lord would be most likely to teach, that He would have left to His disciples the task of giving directions about money, and Himself only spoken concerning faith and love and the discipline of the soul. But not so. He speaks in general terms of these. But He does not speak parables about them for all men's memory, nor permit His fierce indignation against them to be seen by all men. The Pharisees bring Him an adulteress. He writes her forgiveness on the dust of which He had formed her. Another, despised of all for known sin, He forgave when He saw her broken heart. But with a whip of small cords He drives out of the Temple traffickers and thieves; while to a young man who sought His advice the Lord replied, "Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven."

In the gospels we see how, over against the love and worship of God, Christ sets the love and worship of mammon. Listen to Him as He opens His mouth to teach His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount, and presently you will hear Him say, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth consume, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through and steal" (Matthew 6:19-21.) The same truth crops out in parable after parable. The seed of the kingdom, the word of God, is choked by "the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches"; the unforgiving servant is condemned because, after all his debt had been forgiven him, he went out, and found one of his fellow-servants who owed him a hundred pence, and laid hold on him, and took him by the throat, saying, "Pay what thou owest"; the Rich Fool and the Prodigal Son forbid alike the selfish accumulation and the wasteful squandering of wealth, and the story of Dives and Lazarus is the answer of our Lord to the Pharisees who were lovers of money, and who scoffed at His words. Again and again, and yet again, does



Christ lift the warning finger, and cry, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness." If we listen to Him, if we receive Him in our hearts, our ill-gotten gains will give us no peace till, like Zacchaeus, we are ready to vow, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold."

And let us remember that it is not necessary for us to have fifty thousand dollars a year to forget what Christ said, that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth. The cankerworm of covetousness may devour in the poor man's cottage as well as in the rich man's palace. A dime is not very big, but if you hold it near enough to your eye it will shut out the whole heavens from your vision, and will do it just as effectually as a five dollar gold piece. It is to men and women who are holding dimes or dollars so near to them that they never catch so much as a glimpse of what lies beyond that we speak today.

But let us bear in mind that not all coveting is wrong. There is a sense in which covetousness is altogether right. One meaning of covet is to desire earnestly, and there are certain values that we have a perfect right to desire with earnestness.

For instance, every man has a right to covet an opportunity to work. No man can live a rich and full life who is an idler, whether his idleness is born of laziness or lack of opportunity. To work is godlike. "My Father worketh even until now, and I work," said Christ. Every man, therefore, has a right to be a worker. Not only so, but he has a right to work under conditions as wholesome as possible, and for a living wage. Such an opportunity is not a matter of charity, but of justice. And the man who covets the opportunity to work is perfectly right in doing so.

Then every man has a right to covet the realization of his best possibilities as a Christian. The Lord says, "Covet earnestly the best gifts." That means that we are earnestly to desire the very best that God has for us. We are to desire to be our best. We are also to desire to do our best. Jesus pronounces a blessing on all such. "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness," He said. Blessed is the man that yearns to be good himself, and that yearns for that same rich benediction for his fellows. To covet, then, the knowledge of God, to yearn intensely for the triumph of His kingdom within one's heart and throughout the world, is altogether right.

But the word covet as used in our text means inordinate or excessive desire. That is, it means desire that is unlawful. The Lord forbids our desiring that to which we have no right. We are not to covet our neighbor's property, his house, his ox, or his wife. But, lest some values might be left out, the Lord closed with the inclusive word, "Thou shalt not covet . . . anything that is thy neighbor's." We have no right

to desire to possess any value that belongs to our neighbor without making our neighbor an adequate return. When we look at our neighbor's car and say in our heart, "I wish that car were mine, even though my gain would be his loss," then we are guilty of the violation of God's will against covetousness.

But covetousness goes deeper than this. To covet is to desire more than one needs, more than one can possibly use. We believe in private ownership of property, but we do not believe that any man has a right to own all the property in the world. He has no moral right to own that which is of no use to him, and which, but for his greediness, might be of service to another. Such a man becomes a mere dog in a manger. A dog, you know, does not eat hay, or oats, or corn. These are of no value to him. But he can sit in the manger and snap and snarl at the hungry horses and cattle, and thus prevent their eating. In our present world some wealthy men are exactly in that position. They themselves cannot possibly use what they have, and they are unwilling to make it of use to others. Their ownership, therefore, does not mean so much their right to enjoy as the right to keep their fellows from enjoying.

The command against covetousness does not forbid our making money, but it does forbid an overweening desire for it which gains the mastery over us. The Lord condemns no man for wishing to better his condition. Healthy rivalry spurs human progress. One good work stirs up another. The tenth commandment does not forbid our building, if able, a better house than our neighbor, or keeping a finer lawn, or driving a better car, but only our wishing to take away from our neighbor his house, or his car, or his lawn. It says not merely that we shall not take our neighbor's house, but that we shall not even desire to take his house, and shall not covet anything that is our neighbor's. The desire to take is a communist's desire. It is a tramp's doctrine. There is, however, nothing at all in the law of the Lord to hinder a man from doing his very best, and from striving in all lawful and fair ways to outstrip his brother.

What great harm, you may ask, in a mere guilty look, a mere guilty wish, a mere guilty longing? But are they so harmless? Nay, for from these roots of bitterness the grapes of Sodom draw their nourishment. David coveted his neighbor's wife, and this single covetous thought led him on from step to step until he had dishonored himself, done the meanest and most disreputable deeds, ending with murder, under aggravated circumstances. Judas carried the bag and began to covet its contents, and from this covetous beginning was led on until he had betrayed the Son of God with a kiss. Achan saw among the spoils of war a goodly Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold and he coveted them, and from this beginning was led on until he had taken them and concealed them, and brought defeat



and ruin upon the whole Jewish camp. We never can tell where an envious thought will lead or when it will end.

It is the nature of smothered fire to break forth; of an impure fountain to corrupt the stream; of an envious heart to spoil the life. Robertson says of the man who came to Jesus, asking that his brother's inheritance might be divided: "It was covetousness which caused the unjust brother to withhold; it was covetousness which made the defrauded brother indignantly complain to a stranger. It is covetousness which is at the bottom of most lawsuits, social grievances, and political factions. So James traces the genealogy. 'From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even from your lusts which reign in your flesh? (James 4:1)' (Quoted in *The Ten Laws* by Mason, p. 193).

It can be said also of covetousness that while most sins give some pleasure to those who commit them, this one gives no pleasure and only makes men miserable. It hath torment, and nothing but torment. Sin is always bitter at last, though often sweet at first. The glutton takes delight over his table, and the sluggard in his bed. The miser pays a fearful price, and parts with what most men prize, but he has a reward: in loneliness and rags he can count up his gains, gloat over his ecurrencies and handle the gold which is so beautiful in his eyes. An angry man finds relief in bursts of passion, and the vain man is happy in fancied superiority. All these sins have pleasures which last for a season, but covetousness brings no pleasure and gives no joy to its victim. It punishes him even in the act of indulgence. His pleasure is pain. Envy, like a viper, stings the breast that warms it into life. The sight of another's prosperity is only irritation and uneasiness.

Covetousness, or envy, is a deadly upas tree under which vile things gather. It harbors ill-will, malice, detraction, uncharitableness, venom, and bitterness. Lift up a flat stone which has long been lying on the ground, and see what crawling, loathsome creatures run hurrying and wriggling in every direction, away from the light and fresh air. Envy shelters evil. Beneath its dark shade vile things lurk and flourish. Envy is almost always unjust. Envy distorts. It seeks to soil the purity it cannot match, and to detract from excellence which it has not attained.

Make a list of all that love does, and you will have a list of all that envy does not. It is the reverse of love. "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (I Corinthians 13:4-7). In order to read this passage as a description of envy, one has only in mathematical language to change all the signs on both sides. Plus becomes minus,

and minus becomes plus. Sweet becomes bitter, and bitter sweet, light becomes darkness and darkness light. Envy does not suffer long, and is unkind; it vaunts itself, and is puffed up and behaves unseemly and seeks what is not its own; is easily provoked and takes account of evil; it rejoices in unrighteousness and not in the truth; it bears nothing, believes nothing, hopes nothing, and endures nothing.

Whatever is in the heart tends constantly to express itself in the life. Out of the heart, the mouth speaketh. If love is in the heart, it strives to come forth in words and deeds, showing itself in a thousand ways, from giving a cup of cold water to laying down life itself. If covetousness is in the heart, it also strives to come forth in words and deeds, showing itself in a thousand ways, from withholding a cup of cold water to keeping back life itself. As love is an inward brightness of the soul, so covetousness is an inward darkness or eclipse of the soul. It is a creeping paralysis. It is an inward moral death which spreads and spreads more and more, reaching and benumbing faculty after faculty and feeling after feeling, till conscience is dulled, all the finer moral powers blunted, and the whole man corrupted.

The heart of the covetous shrivels and withers within him. It was with profound truth that Tennyson wrote of "the narrowing lust for gold." Every one has read of Silas Marner, in George Eliot's lovely story, withdrawing himself from his kind, shutting himself up with his money, caring and living only for it, until his life became "like a rivulet that has sunk far down from the grassy fringe of its old breadth into a little shivering thread that cuts a groove for itself in the barren sand." That is the penalty of the hoarder. He gets his wealth at the cost of himself. Did you ever ponder that deep saying of the Psalmist David: "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul"? Earth has not any sight so pitiful as that—the shrinking and shriveling of a soul amid the piled-up splendors of material wealth.

And again we say, it is not a question of amount. Once let the passion to get and to have become supreme, and, like a devouring fire, it will desolate all the fairest provinces of the soul, leaving them only a charred and blackened waste.

Covetousness darkens and perverts the mind. It attacks the power of thought and hampers it and limits it and twists it so that clear, correct thinking is impossible. The man who covets his neighbor's house or land or position or business or trade or practice is for that very reason incapable of thinking truly about his neighbor. His mind is in the position of a judge who has received a bribe. That bribe acts on the deliberation of the judge as a magnet drawing his thought away from the true, blinding his mind to justice, and wholly unfitting him to give a decision.



The Lord says, "The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness" (Matthew 6:22,23). The covetous man never sees quite straight, never quite understands himself or his neighbor. A flood of light is thrown upon the situation in which Jesus was found when it is remarked that the Pharisees opposing Him were at heart covetous, money lovers. The narrowing of the eye to see the marks on the coins unfitted them for that large vision which would enable them to understand a life like Christ's. He demanded too wide an angle for their vision. And as they did not understand Him so they could not understand themselves. They were honest, these Pharisees, as honest with Jesus as men inherently dishonest could be. Their very covetousness had given them that twist of vision which set them at a wrong angle themselves, and made any true knowledge of Him impossible. Such men there are still, men who sneer at generosity, men who have no power remaining to understand large-heartedness.

Covetousness reaches out through thought into conduct. A covetous man is first covetous in his thought, and then he is covetous in his action. Christ said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things; and the evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things" (Matthew 12:34,35). Can a spirit of covetousness bring forth good things? It flings its own dark, baneful shadow over nature and over man. It tarnishes whatever it touches. It sees itself everywhere, and finds only vileness. It is blind to the glory and beauty of nature, the freedom and gladness of living things. Neither sea nor sky seems lovely or grand to one who is covetous.

Covetousness is the one root of all selfishness. Where it exists there can be no good, nothing generous or honorable. It pulls down the whole man and makes even what would otherwise be virtuous, mean and disreputable. It is fatal to character. Kindness, truth—all the pure and lovely emotions are smothered in the heart of covetousness. Young people as a rule have a fine sense of honor, but these noble and generous impulses vanish under the bondage of a covetous or envious heart. One scholar says, "Covetousness makes men believe in no God but mammon; no devil but the absence of gold; no damnation but being poor, and no hell but an empty purse" (Quoted in *The Ten Laws* by Mason, p. 195).

Covetousness disturbs all the highest possibilities of life, and finally makes them impossible. These highest possibilities are indicated in the Lord's arrangement of the fruit of the Spirit: "Love, joy peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control." Covetousness will destroy the bloom and mar the beauty of

all this fair cluster. Instead of love, there will be suspicion and hatred; instead of joy, sorrow, heart-ache; instead of peace, feverish unrest; instead of longsuffering, impatience; instead of kindness, cruelty; instead of goodness, miserliness; instead of faithfulness, infidelity; instead of meekness, arrogance; instead of self-control, self-assurance.

Was there ever a day in which the Lord's warning against covetousness was more needed than today? Is it too much to say that covetousness lies at the root of all the evil that blight the world, especially its so-called civilized portion? The oppression of feeble races, the indifference to righteousness that alone exalts a nation, the toleration of evils that sap the virtue of the people — these all may be traced to the restless and unsatisfied heart of man in his covetousness for that which, possessed, does but breed new desire. In Mr. Watts' famous picture of Mammon, a terrible indictment, he has portrayed the monster as of enormous proportions, bloated and apparently comfortable in his swinish overfulness. While we admit the force of the picture, had we the artist's brush we would not so paint him, but rather lean and gaunt, hungry and wild, with one arm clasping the nations and the other out-reached, with fury on his face that there was no more to possess.

How is the strangle-hold of this monster to be broken? How is the covetous spirit to be conquered and cast out? For conquered and cast out it can be, but how? "Take heed and beware of covetousness," said the Son of God. We can help ourselves to conquer covetousness by refusing to fix our attention upon the forbidden. How much time we spend gazing upon values that we know we cannot have. We have known people that could not go window shopping without coming back fretful, discontented, and all but miserable. There were so many things they wanted that they could not have that they felt quite sorry for themselves. Refuse to look longingly at that which you cannot have. That is good sense. It is also quite possible. More than once we have desired a thing intensely. But having found that it was not for us, we have ceased to look at it, and have thus forgotten it completely.

And above all, since covetousness is not a matter of the lips or of the hands, but of the heart, therefore must we open our hearts to receive Christ, that every thought may be brought into captivity to His will. The sure way to victory over covetousness is the way of conversion. It is the way of the new birth. It is the way of personal surrender to Jesus Christ. Paul, having obeyed the gospel, declared that it was God that worked within him, both to will and to do His good pleasure. The Lord helped him to make right choices, and to have right desires. God enabled him to say from the inner depths of his soul, "Not my will, but thine be done."

The outcome of this was that Paul conquered covetousness. Thus conquering, he became a contented man. "I have learned," he says,



"in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." What an achievement for one so passionate and intemperate! How did he attain his state of contentment? He did not attain it in a moment. He learned it through long discipline. He learned it, above all else, in the fellowship of Jesus Christ.

The way of victory for Paul is the way of victory for you and me. He found freedom in Christ. He learned that to all who trust in Christ, and obey His will, there is granted that very life which was in Christ. The apostle was passionately longing to be redeemed from himself, and in Christ this redemption was possible. He was created anew in Christ Jesus; died with Christ, and with Christ rose again.

Will you follow Paul as he followed Christ in faith, repentance and baptism that you may be added to the family of God where you will find contentment which beggars description.

## BAPTISM A MEASURE OF FAITH

By JAMES D. WILLEFORD

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The New Testament teaches that we are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8). Grace and faith arise like twin mountains in the field of Christian teaching. They are two mighty suns ruling in the firmament of divine revelation, about which circle all other truths. Grace (the divine giving) and faith (the human taking) form the highest generalization of Christianity. No teaching can represent the gospel fairly which is not true to the over-shadowing prominence of these doctrines.

The end which faith is designed to serve is, to bind the soul to Christ despite many opposing influences, and carry it forward in a heroic effort to realize a righteous life. But this task is one of no small difficulty, and it is one which a weak faith cannot accomplish. The Scriptures do not teach that a man is justified and saved simply by faith, but by strong faith.

Paul used the example of Abraham to prove that we are not justified by weak faith, but by strong faith. The apostle says that Abraham "believed against hope, to the end that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, So shall thy seed be. And without being weakened in faith he considered his own body now as good as dead and the deadness of Sarah's womb: yea, looking unto the promise of God, he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Rom 4:18-21).

In this Scripture we have a description of strong, heroic faith, and immediately after speaking of it as "strong" and "fully assured," the apostle Paul says: "WHEREFORE also it was reckoned unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:22). What was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness? Why, the faith that was strong and fully assured. If justification may be reached by any faith, weak or strong, Paul's whole argument on justification falls to the ground. The case of Abraham proves that God will justify a man who has strong faith in Him, and it also proves that He will not justify a man of weak faith.

When the apostle Paul comes to apply the lesson of Abraham's faith to our conversion to Christ, he draws the conclusion that we also are justified by strong faith. He said, "Now it was not written for his (Abraham's) sake alone, that it (faith) was reckoned unto him; but for our sake also, unto whom it shall be reckoned, who believe on him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead" (Rom. 4:23,24). When Abraham was ninety-nine years old, God promised him a son. It would have been easy for the old patriarch to stagger at this promise since, according to the laws of nature, such was impossible, but the Bible states that he wavered not through unbelief. Abraham's faith included the laying hold on a promise which embraced the great desire of his life. It was a reliance of the heart on God for the bestowment of a great blessing. His faith was a strong, unwavering trust. Paul's conclusion is that our faith must be sufficiently strong that we like Abraham, will believe what the Lord says even if we do not understand how He can fulfill His promise.

Another characteristic of Abraham's faith was that it was obedient. When the Lord asked him to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldees, and go into a strange land he readily complied. In writing of Abraham's faith the inspired writer of the Hebrew letter says, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb. 11:8). Abraham's faith was a strong, fully assured, loving, loyal and obedient trust. This was the kind of faith that was reckoned unto him for righteousness, and this is the kind that will be reckoned unto us for righteousness.

Christ emphasized that a weak faith will not justify any man. He said, "If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. . . . So therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26-33). This language is very positive, and it certainly teaches that the bond of faith which is strong enough to bind us to Christ will snap all earthly ties, however dear, rather than forsake the Lord. Such a faith is not weak, but heroic. If these plain, faithful words of the Master are true, none but heroes can be His disciples. It



was this one fact, laid to heart by the early church, that drove the little band like a plough-share through the Roman Empire, and gave Christianity to the ages.

We must remember that faith is but a means to an end—that it is to accomplish a certain object; and if it fails to do this, it is worthless. Faith is the force behind the Christian life. This life must always be lived in the face of opposition. The opposition will come, not only from the world at large, but from friends—often from father, mother, sister, brother, wife, children, and most fearful of all, from the passion-springs of one's own heart. To live against all this is to be a hero. His deeds may not be emblazoned to the world, but the true Christian is always God's hero. It is true that the Christian does not struggle alone, but the help he receives from above does not come in the shape of overcoming the foe for him, but in making him stronger to resist temptation; so it is his faith at last that must do the work. The master heresy of any age is, that justification before God may be reached by a weak faith.

Another characteristic of justifying faith is love. Without this, Paul said that all faith would be profitless (I Cor 13:2,3). Love is the vital element in faith, and it is that power by which faith works. The Bible states that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6). When faith loses its love, it is already stricken with paralysis; it can no longer act. James says the devils believe and tremble (James 2:19). They have faith in God, and they believe He will do what He says. That is why they tremble! But they have no love for God's righteous way, and so they perish despite their faith.

Since true faith in Christ is an act of moral, loyal trust, we are prepared to observe another thing regarding it. If any man is deterred from accepting Christ by his attachment to a life of sin, something else must happen before he can commit himself to Christ. What is this something? It is repentance. Repentance will, in the very nature of the case, be prompted by saving faith. Someone has said, "The loyalty of faith is forged in the furnace of repentance." No faith is loyal to Christ that does not prompt a person to repent of his sins.

Our study now brings us to another urgent and vital question: If salvation is not simply by faith, but by strong faith, then how strong must it be? Until this question is answered no one can know when he has complied with this necessary condition of salvation. If salvation were simply by faith, it would be only necessary to know that one had faith, to be assured that he had come within the reach of salvation. But, as it is by strong faith, he must first know how strong faith must be before he can determine whether or not he has saving faith.

In order for us to determine the strength of our faith we must have some way of measuring it. It is evident that a faith which will confess the Lord only in the closet is not as great as the faith which will con-

fess him from the house-top. A faith which will do no more than confess the Lord is not as great as a faith which readily obeys the word of the Lord. Christ asked, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).

The Christian life must be lived before the world; therefore any faith which cannot face the world, cannot live that life—cannot do faith's work, and is valueless so far as salvation is concerned. Faith must be strong enough to move a person to renounce forever the past, and commit himself, in the eyes of all men, to a new life. The one great act of profession which proves the strength of faith is baptism. It marks a severance from the world as complete as an actual burial, and a rising afterward to a new life. Baptism is by its nature the spirit's profoundest and strongest commitment to Christ. If a person believes the truth regarding Christ, repents of his sins, and then makes a public confession of His name in baptism, it is evident that his faith has been measured, and been found adequate to undertaking the Christian life before the world. But it is possible that a person may have faith in a weaker degree than this. The truth may be believed, the heart may be touched, there may be a real desire to live a better life, and to unite one's self to Christ and enjoy the blessings of His salvation, but this desire may not be strong enough to cause the person to give up all—to snap all ties and bury all joys incompatible with a complete and public surrender. A closet faith may not be heroic; a professing faith must be, if the full meaning of profession is realized.

There were many examples of this weaker type of faith in Christ's time; for we are told that "even of the rulers many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God" (John 12:42,43). There is no reason to suppose that this faith was mere intellectual assent, and that it did not involve the heart. It is designated by the phrase to believe on, which usually represents true and saving faith. These were not bad men fighting against their convictions, but weak men whose faith was not strong enough to lead them to a public profession of Christ.

It seems that Nicodemus was a man who fell in the same class with the rulers. It appears that he was an amiable character who credited Christ's claims, and was in sympathy with His work—who believed in Him and desired to learn of Him—IN SECRET! His was a faith both of the understanding and of the heart, but it was weak. Christ's dealing with him is very instructive. He declined to have any parley with him, but met him abruptly with the decisive words: "Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). We are safe in saying that "born of water and the Spirit" refers to that great act of profession called baptism, and that Christ informs this man that no faith which has not first carried one to a complete and public surrender will be accepted. Christ



knew that the very existence of His kingdom would be imperiled by a weak faith, and He then and there built a wall against it strong and high; a wall to endure for all time. It was this: The faith that shall admit one to the kingdom of God must express itself by public profession before it will be accepted. No objection was made against the faith of the rulers, except that it was weak. They did love "the glory of God," but not so much as "the glory of men," and hence they stumbled at profession. Christ demands a **strong** faith, and therefore a **measured** faith.

Baptism is the measure of faith, but a measure is worthless unless it is used. When a farmer sells a bushel of wheat he uses a measure to determine the quantity. He must first measure the wheat to know that it is a bushel; and then, when that is determined, he receives his pay for a bushel. He cannot sell it for a bushel, and the buyer is not willing to pay him for a bushel, until it is measured. Thus the measuring becomes a condition in the transaction. But it would not, therefore, be proper to say that the farmer receives the pay for the **measure** but rather for the **wheat** which is measured. He receives pay simply for the wheat, for that alone; but he does not receive the pay until the wheat is measured. The wheat will not be received by the purchaser until it is measured. So likewise, since there may be faith of various degrees of strength, and since it is only faith of a certain strength that can be accepted as saving faith, the act of measuring the faith must enter into the transaction, and a man cannot count on having saving faith until he has measured it. Nevertheless, it does not follow that he is saved by the measure, but rather by the faith. With perfect consistency, therefore, baptism, the measuring act, is a part of the salvation which is by faith. That the faith of a man should be measured is perfectly natural and necessary, since justification is not by faith simply, but by an adequate faith.

Religious teachers acknowledge that baptism is a measure of faith, but many of them place baptism **after** salvation. Their conception is that faith saves a person, and he is then baptized as proof of his saving faith. But Christ made salvation dependent upon faith and baptism, He said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16). When men in their teaching, place the remission of sins before baptism they think their action is in the interest of spirituality, but it is really in the interest of spiritual shiftlessness and self-deception. It offers heaven's best, and takes man's poorest. It allows a man to think that any degree of faith will save him, whether it be weak or strong. But the Bible teaches that a man's faith must be strong enough to lead him to make a public profession of the Lord in the act of baptism, before it will save him.

When Paul came to Ephesus he found twelve men who had received the baptism of John after God decreed that it should cease. Christ's baptism had taken its place but these men did not know about it. Now, Paul tells them that John's requirement was, that those receiving his

baptism should "believe on Christ" when He should come. What did these words "believe on Christ" mean? Listen! "And when they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus." It was **this** statement, says Luke, that caused these men to be baptized. But how could it do so unless this believing on Jesus embraced baptism? Did the men understand the meaning of the phrase "believe on Christ"? If not, it was explained to them; but Luke informs us that it was **this** statement that caused them to be baptized.

My friends, in the apostolic age, the command to **believe on the Lord Jesus Christ** caused men to be baptized. After they were baptized the Lord says they believed. (Acts 2:44.) Baptism was the measure of their faith, and it was as much a part of saving faith as was their repentance. Will you follow in the steps of these heroes of faith, and be immersed into Christ that you may fill the measure of an adequate faith?

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT

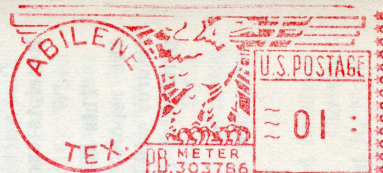
JULY, 1957

Receipts .....	\$22,087.59
Expenditures .....	\$17,263.57
Receipts exceed expenditures by .....	\$ 4,824.02

This abbreviated financial statement is being made in order to have the report printed without delay. Any information other than these figures will be given gladly on request and up-to-date statements will be printed at regular intervals.



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